

Classroom Politics

Purpose

Students will describe various kinds of elections, such as primary elections, and local, state and national elections, including ones to select congressional and presidential office holders. Students will examine ways by which citizens may effectively voice opinions, monitor government, and bring about change in government and the public agenda, including voting and participation in the election process.

Materials

For the teacher: chalk, chalkboard

For the students: notebook paper, pencil, access to the Internet, poster board, art supplies

Activity

A. Pre-Activity Preparation

1. Allow students time to research elections and related topics (i.e. platforms, candidates, etc.) on the Internet.
2. Ask students: "What is an election? What happens during an election?" Discuss what students know about elections.
3. Discuss different types of elections that occur in the United States, emphasizing more familiar high-profile elections, such as presidential, congressional, or gubernatorial elections.
4. Describe people who often run for office, such as business professionals, local celebrities, or lawyers.
5. Define platform as a set of opinions on important issues that a candidate makes clear to voters before an election. Provide examples of platforms (e.g., tax cuts or environmental issues).
6. Explain that the public can help dictate policy by voting for a candidate with a platform that appeals to them.

B. Mock Election

1. Tell students that they will hold an election to choose a classroom representative for a day. Explain that they are going to follow some of the same procedures that apply to a government election.
2. Begin the election by dividing the class into three groups, and explain that each group is going to represent a political party. Name each group (e.g., the "chair party," the "desk party," and the "chalkboard party"). Have each group nominate a few students whom they feel would be good leaders.

Technology Literacy Standards

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
1	X		X	X		X	X
2	X	X	X			X	X
3	X					X	X
4		X				X	X
5						X	X
6		X				X	
7							
8						X	
9						X	
10							
11						X	
12						X	
13				X			
14							
15				X			
16							

X = This Technology Literacy Standard is addressed in this lesson.

= This Technology Literacy Standard is not addressed in this lesson.

3. Have students tear a small piece of scratch paper out of their notebooks to serve as a secret ballot and vote for one of their nominees. Collect and tally the votes and write the winner from each party on the chalkboard. Explain that this nomination is similar to what happens in primary elections.
4. Explain that after nominees have been chosen, different political parties then help their nominee campaign for the final election.
5. Have each group help their nominee develop a platform to run on based on class issues (e.g., increased access to the drinking fountain or improved school lunches).
6. Provide poster board and art supplies for the parties so that they may help their respective nominees campaign for office.
7. Have nominees deliver a short statement to the class about their individual platforms. After all the candidates have been heard, have all students vote again by secret ballot for their preferred nominee. Make sure students understand that they do not have to vote for the candidate from their party.
8. Tally the votes and announce the winner of the election.

C. After the Election

1. Ask students if they think their new representative can fulfill all of his/her promises.
2. Explain that government officials can't always fulfill their promises after they take office.
3. Ask students: "How can you make sure that the officials you elect are doing their job once they take office?" Discuss steps that citizens can take in order to hold officials to their promises (e.g., writing letters, staging protests, or voting for a different candidate in the next election).

Questions for Review

Basic Concepts and Processes

While students are conducting their election, ask them questions such as the following:



What platform had the best issue?



Why were these issues important to you?



Do you think the best candidate won?



Why or why not?



Did the size of a political party affect the election?



What kind of action would you take if the class president didn't do his/her job effectively?